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Miss Mary H. Ladd,
Aug. 12, 1896.

# THE FEDERAL VASES

8079.a.197

*Presented to the Boston Art Club*
*1887*

CAMBRIDGE
Printed at the Riverside Press
1888

THE REPUBLIC.

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

# THE FEDERAL VASES

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# THE FEDERAL VASES.

A FEW years after the close of the War of the Rebellion, the members of the Committee of Congress on the Capitol, considering that it was desirable to place in the Capitol some object of art as a memorial of the stability of the nation, selected the designs for three vases of heroic size, made by Horatio Stone, a sculptor whose talents had already been widely known as the designer of several of the public statues in the city of Washington.

In the appropriation bill for 1870, the item for $10,000 was included for these vases; but the sculptor, whose artistic skill very naturally exceeded his business knowl-

edge, did not sign a contract, which had already been prepared for his signature, presuming that the inclusion of the amount in the appropriation bill was all that was necessary. He immediately set forth for his studio in Italy, where the vases were completed after a lapse of about two years.

On delivering them at the Capitol, it was found, in the absence of the execution of the essential legal instruments, that the amount appropriated had reverted to the treasury, and the affair became the old story of a government claim. The vases were afterwards purchased by the late John Chipman Hoadley, of Lawrence, Mass., a gentleman at that time in affluent circumstances, and a lover of the fine arts. After the death of Mr. Hoadley, the vases were purchased by subscription, and presented to the Boston Art Club in June, 1887.

The Federal vases consist of one pair, and a third vase of much larger size, the

whole trinity forming a design whose unity is intended to commemorate and exemplify the causes of our national stability.

Each of these vases is girt with relievos, forming a processional, whose action advances with the sequence of the design which it betokens.

### PHILOSOPHY.

One vase of the pair is intended to commemorate the development of ethical thought, as shown by the bas-relievos, commencing with the mythological creations of the twilight age, when mankind was beginning to place ethical thoughts in concrete form, and accordingly personified the various operations of the mind, as shown in the relief by Prometheus with the celestial fire and the vulture at his vitals, typifying conscience and the action of remorse. The next figure represents Orpheus returning from Hades with his lyre, recognizing mu-

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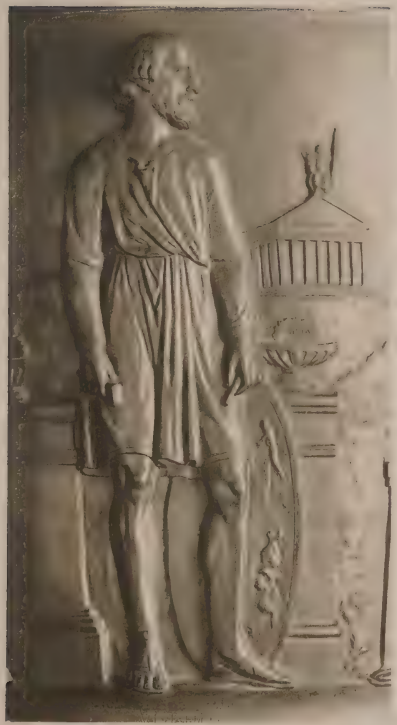
PHILOSOPHY.

sic as one of the first amenities of life even in dawning civilization. Homer is shown in the next figure as representative of poetry and epic composition from the earliest times. Coming to the more modern phases of the Greek mind, there are representations of divine ideas of justice, truth, and beauty, as typified by Aristides, known through all history as the exponent of justice; by Anaxagoras, who, led by his philosophical investigations to the thought of a First Cause, became the teacher of a Divine Providence in a pagan age; then by Phidias, the revealer of divine beauty in works of art; followed by Socrates, the representative of a mind loyal to truth; and concluding with the Christ as the embodiment of the possibilities of the human life when possessed to its full extent by the Divine Spirit.

As this vase represents the fundamental growth of correct thinking as the basis of



PHIDIAS.

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all well doing, so its companion vase typifies in stronger action the inception of the inventive skill which has contributed in such abundant measure to the prosperity of this nation.

INVENTION.

It illustrates the career of freedom in the Western World, which is shown in classical symbolism joined to portraiture. The relievos commemorate the specific inventions which have been fundamentally representative in their nature, as indicative of the fertility of mechanical resource forming the basis of American thrift. Freedom is here depicted as a youth receiving from Minerva a lamp filled with the sacred oil of knowledge. Then breaking away from the traditions of the past, he sets forth; and, meeting Franklin, he is presented with a key symbolizing electricity, and also the impulse to the study of

INVENTION.

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nature. From Fulton he obtains the design of the steamboat; and Morse equips him with the electrical telegraph.

### THE REPUBLIC.

Each one of this pair of vases is in its design tributary to the larger vase representing the Republic, whose stability is based alike upon the morals symbolized by the first vase, and upon the genius portrayed by the second one.

The first relievo shows the inauguration of the first President, Washington, by the first Chief Justice Marshall, and as accessories the first cabinet, the installation of the national arms, and the removal of the arms of Great Britain. On the opposite side of the vase, the consolidation of the Republic upon the suppression of the Rebellion, which was the immediate motive of the creation of the vases, is represented by the election of President Grant,

FRANKLIN.

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with Washington, Lincoln, and Farragut, and as auxiliaries, Peace with her olive wreath, Prosperity with her horn of plenty, and Progress advancing in her chariot.

This is no place to offer a critique upon the vases, but it might not be inappropriate to call attention to the unity of the whole design. Although the theme of the first vase permitted a more graceful treatment of the bas-relievos, yet in all of them the sculptor displayed masterly skill in the graceful manner in which he maintained close adherence to the classical tenets while conforming the composition to the conditions of the design. The representation of portrait figures clad in the conventional costume of the last century, without the possibility of utilizing either the graceful lines of flowing drapery or the curves of the human body, has been accomplished without imposing any sense or

THE FIRST INAUGURATION.

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even detail of awkwardness in any figures. The bronze is finished to a dead lustre sufficiently dulled by time, so that the outlines are clearly defined and free from interference by reflected light.

Although the sculptor spent nearly all of his artistic career in Italy, yet it is evident that he lost none of his nationality under the influences of a foreign clime, but has produced a work whose motive is peculiarly, aggressively, and artistically American in its patriotism.

# CORRESPONDENCE.

BOSTON, MASS., *May* 28, 1887.

CHARLES G. WOOD, Esq.

*President Boston Art Club.*

DEAR SIR, — Acing as trustee, on behalf of myself and others, I beg to present to the Boston Art Club three bronze vases, designed and modeled in Italy by Horatio Stone for the Capitol at Washington.

These Federal vases are of heroic size, surrounded by bas-relievos illustrating the subjects which they are designed to commemorate.

One symbolizes religious philosophy, beginning with the early mythological representations, and culminating in the Christ;

the mate to this vase represents the growth of invention ; and the third, which is larger than the other two, typifies the elements producing the origin and the present strength of this government.

Through some informality, the appropriation for these vases reverted to the government ; and they were afterwards purchased by the late John Chipman Hoadley, from whose estate they were purchased by subscription among the present donors.

Yours very truly,

C. J. H. Woodbury.

Boston Art Club, *June* 14, 1887.

C. J. H. Woodbury, Esq.

Dear Sir, — The three beautiful vases presented by yourself and others to the Boston Art Club were accepted by the Club by vote at a meeting held on the 4th ult., and have been received at the Club House.

The undersigned were also directed by such vote to suitably acknowledge your generous gift.

In doing so, we beg to assure you that this valuable acquisition is fully appreciated, and the generosity and kindness of the donors duly recognized.

These beautiful works of art will add very greatly to the adornment of our rooms, and also give great pleasure to the members; and we tender to you, and through you to your associates in this most acceptable gift, the sincere thanks of the Boston Art Club.

Very respectfully,

CHARLES G. WOOD, *President.*
CHARLES WHEELER, *Secretary.*

B.P.L. Bindery,
NOV 8 1890